

VOLUNTEER VOICE



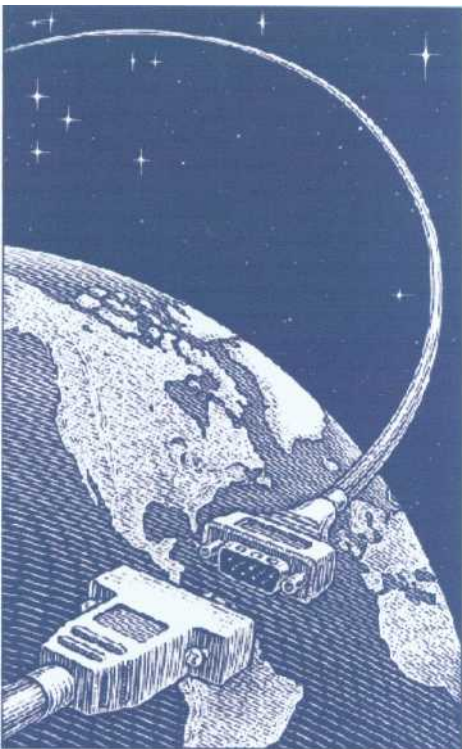
June 2002

"The Voice of the Earth Team"

Virtual Volunteering Gains Popularity

A new poll conducted for the Council for Excellence in Government found that 67 percent of all Americans, or about 192 million people, have access to the internet, and 148 million of those people use the internet for e-government 'very' or 'somewhat' often. This makes the internet a valuable recruiting tool.

Another growing area is virtual volunteering. With this type of volunteering, the volunteer completes tasks, in whole or in part, via the internet and a home or work computer. It's also known as 'online volunteering' and 'cyber service.' Virtual volunteering is popular with volunteers because they can work from the comfort of their homes and



Learning, Volunteering Same Process For Illinois Students

When Steve Melton heard about the NRCS Earth Day outdoor classroom for middle school students in Champaign County, Illinois, he found a creative way to use the Earth Team to make his high school class a part of the action.

The theme for the event was Habitat, Humans and Harmony. Melton saw this as a chance for his biology class to help out and to take biodiversity beyond the textbook.

A farm in the Embarras River watershed was chosen because of the amount and extent of wildlife habitat on the site, as well as conservation practices that help alleviate flooding in the watershed. His students all live in the watershed, and flooding has impacted all their lives at one time or another. The site demonstrates solutions to very local resource issues.

Melton saw this as a unique opportunity to not only illustrate lessons in the natural sciences, but also to get his students thinking about how individuals can do their part to address local resource concerns.

Although the lessons at the outdoor classroom were developed for younger students, Melton contacted the Habitat, Humans & Harmony coordinators at the NRCS Illinois State Office to find a way for his students to be involved. NRCS staff invited the class to sign up with the Earth Team and help younger students learn about farming, conservation, and the environment.

The day before the event, 51 Villa Grove High School students, working as volunteers, helped set up for the event. NRCS / SWCD staff gave the students a tour of the wetlands

and one hour of training, which included a course on how farmers use the land to meet production needs while protecting soil and water resources and providing wildlife habitat. The students spent another hour putting up signs, arranging equipment, and setting up tables and chairs.

During each day of the two-day event, nine other Villa Grove High School students served as Earth Team Volunteers as well. Each student spent most of his or her time assisting a station presenter to deliver lessons on conservation to more than 550 middle school students. The volunteers also assisted in lunchtime supervision and cleanup. In all, these young Earth Team volunteers provided 297 hours of service for the event.

Villa Grove High School volunteers plan to return for next year's Earth Day program and both Melton and NRCS staff are exploring ways the class can help out the rest of the year.

These volunteers are learning about the benefits of volunteerism and careers in conservation. But more importantly, the Earth Team in Illinois is making it possible for high school students to get involved and make Earth Day extra special for younger kids. For more information contact Jill Creamean, NRCS communications specialist, at (217) 353-6609 or jill.creamean@il.usda.gov.



Earth Team volunteers from Villa Grove High School take a break from Earth Day activities.

Don't Rule Out Any Sources in Search of Volunteers

In your search for volunteers, it pays to look beyond the 'standard' sources. Anyone is a potential volunteer.



When the Central Florida RC&D Homebuyer's Club needed someone to help potential first-time homebuyers qualify and process paper work, Lake Wale Mayor Linda Kimbrough agreed to do it as a volunteer. With 14 years of experience in the banking and home building business, Kimbrough was more than qualified to guide inexperienced homebuyers through the process. Potential volunteers are everywhere. Seek them out.

Volunteers Among 'Winners' at Nebraska Science Bowl

Ninety Earth Team volunteers lent their time to the eighth annual Regional Science Bowl conducted February 2 in Lincoln, Nebraska. The volunteers included some NRCS state office employees, retirees and staff members from the Northern Plains Regional Office. However,

most of the volunteers were recruited from the local community.

Nationally, the U.S. Department of Energy sponsors the Science Bowl. The Nebraska regional event is the only one sponsored by NRCS, which is involved in a lesser role in other Science Bowl competitions throughout the country.

The Nebraska regional featured 28, five-person high school teams. During the competition, students answered questions about astronomy, biology, physics, chemistry, mathematics, earth science and computer science.

Omaha Creighton Preparatory High School advanced from the regional competition to the National Science Bowl for the second straight year. However, the 90 Earth Team Volunteers also are winners!

Virginia Scouts Plant Trees

Camp Shenandoah, the Stonewall Jackson Area Council Camp for the Boy Scouts of America, is the site

of the largest conservation program in Virginia's history. Nearly 140 Boy Scouts and Scout leaders planted 1,300 hardwood trees. The BSA enrolled a farm, which serves as an outdoor classroom for Scouts, into the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program.



As part of the tree-planting effort, the Scouts became Earth Team volunteers, contributing more than 900 volunteer hours complete the job.

Volunteer Voice Article and Photo Submission Suggestions

So, you want to submit an article to Volunteer Voice. Good. The newsletter of the Earth Team needs and encourages your submissions.

Here are some suggestions for you to follow to help ensure that your submissions will fit the newsletter's format.

Keep it short. Space in Volunteer Voice is limited, and it is hard to keep a reader's attention. Keep stories fewer than 350 words. Also, remember that the article you submit will be edited and could be shortened to make it fit an available space. If the published article is not exactly as you submitted it, don't take it personally.

Get to the point. Your article should explain Who, What, Where, When and Why. It also should be apparent very early in the story - in the first paragraph or two - how the article relates to the Earth Team and its mission. Write in an inverted-pyramid style - most important information first.

Remember the newsletter's objective. Volunteer Voice is not intended as a means for you

to recognize volunteers. You have other ways of doing that within your state. We want and need articles for Volunteer Voice that inform others about ways that volunteers can be recruited, utilized, maintained, rewarded, etc. Other readers should be able to learn something from your article. "Feel Good" stories about particular volunteers or groups of volunteers are fine as long as the newsletter objective is met.

You Don't Have To Mention Everyone. You will not have the space to include everyone in your story, nor should you try (see items 1, 2 and 3 above). Again, remember your objective. You may want to include the names of every person and organization that had some small role in planning and carrying out an event, but there's not enough space for that. And, those details are not important to most readers. You don't want to offend anyone, but if you don't edit out the fluff, somebody else is going to have to do it for you. Write tightly and you maintain more control over the content of your article.

Include photos. If a photograph would complement your story, include one. If your story is about a particular volunteer, NRCS or district employee, rather than a concept, people like to see a face. Also, sometimes a photo and a cutline (caption) explaining the photo is all that is needed. That's fine. Don't try to stretch something out into a story if the photo tells the story.

In taking and choosing photographs for submission, remember that closer is better. If you are taking the photo and you think you are too close to the subject, move two steps closer! Also, only submit ONE photo, except in special circumstances when more than one is needed. If you absolutely cannot decide which of your photos is best, send more, and we'll make the decision. Upon your request, photos and negatives will be returned to you.

Photos are preferred in slide, negative or print form. If you must send a digital photograph, the file should be at least 2 x 3

inches, 150 dpi, and saved as a TIFF. This may require you to set your digital camera to the highest quality possible. Color or black-and-white prints, slides and negatives will be accepted. The caption should include Who, What, When and Where. If photos include more than one person, make sure the caption clearly identifies who is who.

All information should be submitted to your State

Volunteer Coordinator. Your state volunteer coordinator will forward applicable items to the national volunteer coordinator. The national volunteer coordinator and her staff will review all items submitted nationwide and determine which ones to forward to the newsletter editor. The national volunteer coordinator will have final approval of the newsletter and its content. In some cases, article,, and photos may be retained for possible inclusion in later editions.

Submissions to the Volunteer Voice

Articles and photographs for publication should be mailed, preferably via state volunteer coordinators, to **Volunteer Voice**, Soil and Water Conservation Society, 7515 NE Ankeny Road, Ankeny, Iowa 50021. For fax transmission, dial (515) 289-1227.

Articles should be fewer than 350 words. Please remember to send photographs. Slides or negatives are preferred. If you must send a digital photograph it should be at least 2 x 3 inches at 150 dots per inch saved in a TIFF format. Set digital cameras to the highest setting to save as a TIFF. For detailed instructions on submissions please refer to the factsheet titled, "Volunteer Voice Article and Photo Submission Suggestions." For a copy of this factsheet please call 1-888-LANDCARE.

For information about the Earth Team and the **Volunteer Voice**, call 1-888-LANDCARE or your local Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) office listed in the telephone directory under "U.S. Government, U.S. Department of Agriculture."

United States Department of Agriculture

**Natural Resources
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